Mormon Battalion Crossing Marker
Yuma, Yuma County, Arizona

TRAIL SEGMENT
2. Main Command

TRAIL DATE
10-11 Jan 1847

DEDICATION DATE
1992

GPS COORDINATES
32° 42.733’ N
114° 43.332’ W
WGS84

by Bill Kirchner, 15 December 2012 - Side
by Bill Kirchner, 15 December 2012 – Back
by unknown photographer, 31 March 2007 – note pristine white marker
by Bill Kirchner, 15 December 2012 - Setting
Description

This stone masonry marker with a white painted iron Mormon Battalion skull atop and bronze plaque on the back is in Yuma, Arizona, across from Nuevo Algodones, Mexico, between the Colorado River and a paralleling irrigation canal. This marker is placed too far north. To get around the 300 foot tall Algodones Sand Dunes, impassible to the Battalion's wagons, Cooke followed General Kearny's path, crossing 3.7 miles further down river at a “lower crossing.” A "middle crossing" used by civilians was developed across from the 876 foot tall Pilot Knob (an extinct volcanic formation), and the Army developed the "upper crossing" at Fort Yuma.

Driving Directions

Take I-8 Exit 172 (Winterhaven/Fourth Ave) near the California- Arizona state line, then go south 1.2 miles on I-8 Business Route (Winterhaven Drive/4th Avenue) across the Colorado River into Arizona. Turn right on West 8th Street and go west 5.0 miles to South Somerton Avenue. Turn right to return to West 8th Street, and continue west another 0.7 mile to the canal road. Marker is 400 feet to the southwest on the west side of the canal. Turn right and go 0.5 miles north on the canal road to the canal bridge. Cross over the canal. turn left to go back south to the marker.

Inscriptions

Marker 1 of 2.  Front Upper Marker.

1846 US ARMY 1848
COLORADO RIVER CROSSING
MORMON
BATTALION
TRAIL

Marker 2 of 2.  Back Lower Plaque.

Mormon Battalion Crossing

This monument marks the approximate site of the crossing of the Colorado River by the Mormon Battalion on 10 and 11 January 1847.

The Mormon Battalion consisted of 500 volunteer soldiers from among the Mormon pioneers as they crossed Iowa in 1846. They were mustered into the United States Army at Council Bluffs, Iowa, on 16 July of that year to serve in the War with Mexico. They marched down the Missouri River to Fort Leavenworth where they joined the Army of the West under General Stephen W. Kearney.

The Mormon soldiers, all members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, proceeded to Santa Fe, New Mexico, which advance elements of the Army had already occupied. The Battalion was then assigned its unique mission: to carve out a wagon road from New Mexico to California. Thus the U.S. army could more easily supply its outposts in southern California and others planned for the Southwest. The Mormon Battalion completed its march on 29 January 1847 in San Diego.
History
Erected 1992 by B. C. Smith and fellow members of his Yuma, Arizona Boy Scout Troop 97 as his Eagle Scout project: “This project dates back to 1992. It is the first of three that I plan to post as Way Marks (it's the oldest) Marker Steer-Head......Colorado River Crossing, the point where the Mormon Battalion crossed to California.....Note the information stamped on the Steer Head, as well as the bit of welded information on the base......and of coarse the Big covered information plaque.” (B.C. Smith Eagle Scout Project - Yuma, Arizona - Eagle Scout Project Sites on Waymarking.com)

The western side of the white painted iron upper marker – facing the Colorado River and Mexico – is in pristine condition. The eastern side – facing Yuma – is rusted, worn, and beaten, apparently due to vandal “target practice” between 31 March 2007 and 7 August 2008. This is dangerous, as missed shots may carry over into the populated area on the other side of the river.

Credits
See “B.C. Smith Eagle Scout Project - Yuma, Arizona - Eagle Scout Project on Waymarking.com”, http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WM4FE0_BC_Smith_Eagle_Scout_Project_Yuma_Arizona. This page was posted on 17 August 2008 by GIDEON-X and published by The Leperchauns. Also see http://www.hmdb.org/Marker.asp?Marker=62011 This page originally submitted on 20 September 2012 by Bill Kirchner of Tucson, Arizona. • Syd Whittle was the editor who published this page.